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Amenorhea

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John Ker – Virg^a

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Thesis

On Amenorrhœa:

By John Ker. Virg.a

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Dec.r 4th 1821.
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Thos Hopkins -

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From the etymology of the term Amenorrhœa, we might restrict its use to a case, which seldom, if ever, occurs: the strict and litteral meaning being a non recurrence of the menstrual flux, at precisely monthly periods, as is evident from a reference to its component, α, μην, and ρεω.

But pathologists have used this term to signify a morbid affection, of which they have made three species viz. Emansio menium, Suppressio Menseum, and Amenorrhœa difficilis ordysmenorrhœa.

The Emansio Menseum seems to be generally considered a symptomatic disease, and entertaining such views of its pathology we may readily find prolific causes for its production. Fevers, and indeed all constitutional diseases which cripple and exhaust the vital energies might be enumerated as its causes, together with a number of local affections, and organic defects, such as diseases of the ovaria, the want of a uterus, an imperforate vagina &c.

Some have attributed a long catalogue of morbid symptoms to retention of the menses, though it appears to have been done without any good, or sufficient reason. The argument that is

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most confidently stated to prove, that those symptoms, which have been multiplied to an almost unlimited number, have been occasioned by the retention of the catamenia, is, that they subside or are totally removed by the establishment of that secretion. The reality of the case however, is found on a more accurate investigation of the matter, to be widely discrepant from their views. They seem to have forgotten that it is necessary for the system to be in a certain state of healthfulness, and that all its parts must harmonise, in order for the uterus to carry on its proper healthy secretion, and that retention of this secretion ought to be enumerated amongst the residue of the symptoms of a cachectic state of the whole, or at least of a part of the female oeconomy

It is impossible to say at what time the uterine system should put on this secretory action in any particular subject, since we are taught by physiologists that no two women have the discharge at precisely the same age. It is said of the Hungarian sisters that they frequently differed both in the period and quantity of their menstruation. From these circumstances may we not infer the possibility of their having differed with regard to the flowing of their menstrua in the first instance.

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Being satisfied that Emmenia menstrum is a symptom and not a disease it would be more appropriately treated of under the diseases of which it is symptomatic; but as it is generally treated of as a disease we shall briefly mention some of the leading indications and modes of effecting them, in two states of the system which most frequently accompany the absence of the catamenia at the age at which they most usually occur.

It is evident from what has been said, that we are not to interfere in every case when the menstrua do not appear at the time, at which we might have expected their appearance. We may justly interpose when together with the absence of this discharge about the thirteenth or fourteenth year we find a sluggishness, and frequent sense of lassitude and debility, with various symptoms of dyspepsia; and sometimes with preternatural appetite. At the same time the face loses its vivid colour, becomes pale, and sometimes of a yellowish hue; the whole body becomes affected with oedematous swellings. The breathing is hurried by any quick or laborious motion of the body, and the heart is liable to palpitation and syncope — A head-ach sometimes occurs; but more certainly pains of the back, loins, and

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[illegible] this state of things [illegible] sometimes complained. A cough resembling phthisis pulmonalis may be distinguished from it by the pulse although frequent and long continued, to the same regularity in their exacerbations as in hectic, the patient finds no difficulty in lying on either side, the cough is sometimes convulsive, and commonly comes on in paroxysms as the morning attended with exacerbations in the morning, and slight expectoration of phlegm. It has also been usual to note the diagnosis between this state of the system and chlorosis, from which it is to be distinguished by the absence of the peculiar yellow tinge of the conjunctiva of the skin, of the urine and of the dry, shrivelled stools.

The prognosis in this disease will be favourable or otherwise according to the existence of complication. It may safely be said that the situation of the mind is in no case the sole cause of death. It must then depend upon the cause bringing the system up to its proper point of action, and whether subverting the leading cause of the disorganization [illegible] is supposed to be in this case atony rather than inertness of the general system and consequently of the nervous system.

Unless vomiting ensue, a grain or two of the last preparation, it will not only be innocuous by evacuating the stomach of any noxious matter which might be lodged there, and cleansing it of viscid phlegm and mucus; but beneficial effects may be anticipated from the agitation of the whole system. To insure vomiting the Pulv. Rad. Calli. Ipe. would probably answer as well as any other substance, or its efficacy would probably be increased by the addition of ℈ss or ℈j grs of the Tart. Anti. et Potasse or XV or XX grs of the former.

The next step is to open the bowels and establish their proper action, which is generally torpid and inefficient. For this purpose we should then recur to the use of cathartics, some of which seem to be more eligible than calomel in combination with some of the drastic vegetable cathartics, such as Jalap, Rhubarb, Aloes, or the Hellebore. Helleborus niger

Full purging will most probably be necessary at first, and then the bowels must be kept in a soluble state by small and repeated doses of, of combinations of some of the foregoing medicines, or a combination of Myrrh and aloes [illegible] by some practitioners a valuable stimulant and eco-

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[illegible] spasm, severe headache, pains in the back bone, and about the pelvis, pains in the inferior extremities; [illegible] nausea, [illegible] costiveness and [illegible] symptoms, sometimes [illegible], [illegible] in the morning, and [illegible] symptoms.

In conformity with the practice, our highly esteemed and learned obstetrics, we shall mention the long-known [illegible] disease, and natural obstructions of the [illegible]. All the symptoms attendant on the natural process of gestation are so essentially different from those we have enumerated that it will be quite unnecessary to detail them all in this place. It will be sufficient to state that the symptoms, instead of being [illegible] from [illegible] progressively worse and worse, while the distinctive symptoms of pregnancy gradually abate until the eighth month, when the question can be clearly settled by the motions of the foetus in utero.

There called a salient aspect in the management of our object would be to admit the [illegible] of the symptoms and establish if possible all the reality functions. Prompt and energetic measures must then be resorted to.

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The powder leaves of Savin in dose v. vel x grs; ℥j Tinctu. Cantharidis, ♏x gtts. Tinctu. Cal. ℥ss gradually increased to ℥j ℥ij ter in die; are said to be amongst the most efficient.

A decoction of Senega made by adding a pint of boiling water to an ounce of the root bruised, and letting it simmer over the fire till the quantity is reduced one third, to which may be added an aromatic, to prevent nausea, is very highly recommended by persons eminently qualified to judge of the merits of the article. The state of the system is to be attended to in general minutely.

From five to ten grains of aloes with a grain of calomel every other night at bedtime will be a useful aperient during our whole course. The preparation of the medicine above directed is to be used to the amount of a pint or a pint and a half daily, or a sufficient quantity to keep the bowels in a natural state, and free as far as the stomach will bear during the cure. This will be a good season to call in assistance the powers of clysters and fomentations. The sulphurous and mercurial mineral waters are also recommended.

[illegible]

[illegible] from numerous [illegible] from [illegible] disease and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

We have nearly equal authority for the long continued use of the Tinct. Guaiac Ammoni. and Tinct. Mur. Fer. By an author of no little celebrity in the medical world, we are told that small doses of Calomel every night at bed time, and a dose of the Tinctu. Cincho. Offici. Ammoni. ter in die, is a very efficient practice in dysmenorrhoïa.

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